



BELIDEUS SCIUREUS.

J. Gould and E.C. Richter del. & lith. Ballinmet & Walton Imp.

BELIDEUS SCIUREUS.

Squirrel-like Belideus.

Didelphys sciurea, Shaw, Zool. of New Holl., pl. xi. p. 29.

Petaurus sciureus, Desm. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., 2nd Edit., tom. xxv. p. 403.

Petaurus (Belideus) sciureus, Waterh. in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part VI. p. 152.—Nat. Lib. Mamm., vol. ix. (Marsupialia), p. 289. pl. xxviii.—List of Mamm. in Brit. Mus. Coll., p. 83.

Norfolk Island Flying Squirrel, Phillip's Voy., pl. in p. 151.

Sugar Squirrel, Colonists of New South Wales.

THIS is not only one of the most elegant and beautiful species of the genus to which it belongs, but is also one of the commonest animals of the country; being very generally dispersed over the whole of New South Wales, where, in common with other Opossums, it inhabits the large and magnificent gum-trees. Nocturnal in its habits, it conceals itself during the day in the hollows and spouts of the trees, where it easily falls a prey to the natives, who capture it both for the sake of its flesh and its skin, which in some parts of the colony they dispose of to the colonists, who occasionally apply it to the same purposes as those to which the fur of the Chinchilla and other animals is applied in Europe,—the trimming of dresses, boas, &c.

At night it becomes as active and agile in its motions as it is sluggish and torpid in the daytime. I observed that it prefers those forests which adorn the more open and grassy portions of the country to the thick brushes near the coast. By expanding the beautiful membrane attached to its sides it has the power of performing enormous leaps, and of passing from tree to tree without descending to the ground: like other animals provided with a similar means of transit, it slightly ascends at the extremity of its leap, and thereby avoids the shock which a direct contact with the branch upon which it alights would cause it to sustain.

It is of course marsupial, and I believe produces two young at a time, as I found two animals about half-grown in the same hole with the adults.

For a beautiful living example of this animal I am indebted to the kindness of my most estimable friend Mrs. Simpkinson, to whom it had been sent by her sister Lady Franklin, who procured it from Port Philip. It has become very tame, and its actions when permitted to run about the apartments are amusing and attractive in the extreme: the slightest projection affording it support, it passes over the cornices, picture-frames and hangings with the greatest ease; it becomes exceedingly animated at night, leaping from side to side of its cage, spreading its membrane and tail, and repeatedly turning completely over, or performing several summersaults in succession. Its usual food is sopped bread and milk, upon which it thrives, and which appears to be a good substitute for its natural food, which consists of insects, the honey of flowers, and the tender buds and leaves of the *Eucalypti*.

Fur extremely soft and of moderate length; general tint of the upper surface ashy grey; a blackish brown line extends from the nose along the middle of the back nearly to the root of the tail; the upper surface of the flank membrane, and the anterior and posterior portion of the fore and hind legs black or brownish black; just below the ear a brownish black patch; feet dusky grey; chin, throat, inner side of the limbs and the under surface of the body white; under side of the flank membrane dusky; the margin fringed with white hairs; tail smoke-grey for somewhat more than the basal half of its length, the remainder deep black; ears nearly naked except at the base, where they are clothed with a black fur, and the posterior margin which is white; eyes very full and black.

The figures represent fully adult animals of the natural size on a branch of one of the commonest of the *Eucalypti* of New South Wales.